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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000661

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [KU](#) [KUWAIT](#) [IRAQ](#) [RELATIONS](#) [SHI](#)
SUBJECT: KUWAITI SHI'A AND SUNNIS CONDEMN IRAQ SHRINE
BOMBING; SOME BLAME U.S.

REF: A. KUWAIT 634
[1](#)B. KUWAIT 630

Classified By: DCM Matt Tueller for reason 1.4 (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary and comment: During a February 24 rally at the Shi'a Imam Hussein mosque, Kuwaitis from across the religious and political spectrum condemned the bombing of the Al-Askariya shrine in Iraq. While most speakers blamed the attack on Sunni extremists and stressed the need for Muslim unity, many also either directly or indirectly blamed the U.S.; some even suggested the attackers were agents of the U.S. and/or Israel. In the most vicious attack, former member of Parliament (MP) Adnan Abdul Samad said, "Targeting these shrines destroys the unity of Sunnis and Shi'a in Iraq and boosts the Zionist-American scheme in the region." He also accused the U.S., which he called the "mother of sectarianism" and a "snake's head," of intentionally fomenting sectarian conflict among Muslims in order to "take control of the Islamic world." Shi'a MP Dr. Hassan Jowhar and Secretary General of the Justice and Peace Gathering (a Shi'a political association) Abdul Hussein Al-Sultan both called for Ambassador Khalilzad to be replaced, accusing him of contributing to sectarian tensions in Iraq by calling for a national unity government. Representatives from two conservative Sunni political associations, the Ummah (Nations) Party and the Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM), also spoke at the rally. During the speeches, some audience members periodically shouted "Death to Israel, death to America"; as well as, "Death to Zargawi, death to Bin Laden."

[1](#)2. (C) Comment: Post does not see an immediate threat of sectarian tension from Iraq spilling over into Kuwait. The rally, which was attended by several conservative Sunni groups, demonstrated the relatively good relations between Kuwait's Shi'a and Sunni communities, even their more conservative elements. More worrying, however, is the spillover of anti-U.S. sentiments. Events in Iraq and elsewhere in the region are allowing some degree of anti-U.S. feeling to be expressed in a population that normally is uniquely disposed to view U.S. actions in the region in a favorable light. Ironically, many of the speakers at the rally were close embassy contacts and meet regularly with embassy officials, highlighting the contradictory views of many in the region. One contact even asked Poloff prior to the rally for assistance in obtaining a U.S. visa and expressed a desire to meet with the Ambassador. Asked why the speakers had expressed such strongly anti-U.S. views only days before Kuwait celebrated Liberation Day, he responded with a shrug, "This is democracy. This is free speech." End summary and comment.

Conservative Kuwaiti Shi'a and Sunni Condemn Shrine Bombing

13. (C) The National Islamic Alliance (NIA), a conservative, pro-Iranian Shi'a political association in Kuwait, organized a rally February 24 at the Shi'a Imam Hussein mosque to protest the February 22 bombing of the Al-Askariya shrine in Samarra, Iraq. (Comment: The NIA and worshippers frequenting the Imam Hussein mosque are often referred to as "Kuwaiti Hizbollah," a pejorative term used primarily by their political opponents to discredit them (ref B). One former Shi'a member of Parliament (MP) told Poloff recently that the Imam Hussein mosque was "the political center of Kuwaiti Hizbollah." Additional information on "Kuwaiti Hizbollah" has been reported through separate channels. End comment.) The rally was attended by approximately 400 people; though there were several prominent Sunni Islamist leaders present, it was unclear what portion of the audience was Sunni. Speakers included former NIA MPs Adnan Abdul Samad and Dr. Abdul Mohsen Jamal; current Shi'a MPs Dr. Hassan Jowhar and Sayed Hussein Al-Qallaf; Secretary General of the Justice and Peace Gathering (JPG), a moderate Shi'a political association, Abdul Hussein Al-Sultan; Secretary General of the Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM), the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait, Dr. Bader Al-Nashi; Vice President of the Ummah (Nations) Party, a controversial Salafi political association, Awwad Al-Dhafiri; and liberal writer Ahmed Deyain. The rally was one of several that took place on February 23 and 24 (ref A).

14. (C) During the speeches, some audience members periodically shouted religious and political slogans, including, "Death to Israel" and "Death to America"; as well as, "Death to Zargawi" and "Death to (Osama) bin Laden." Dr. Abdullah Sahar, a moderate Shi'a professor at Kuwait University who attended the event, told Poloff after the

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rally that those shouting slogans had been planted around the mosque by "the organizers of the event" and did not represent the majority view. According to Sahar, one audience member even challenged a speaker's accusation of U.S. complicity in the bombing and left the mosque in protest.

"A Zionist-American Scheme?"

15. (C) Most speakers blamed the attack on "Takfiris" intent on dividing Shi'a and Sunni Muslims, and emphasized the need for Muslim unity. (Note: "Takfiris" or "Takfireen" are Muslims who accuse other Muslims of being "kafirs" (infidel) for not adhering to their strict interpretation of Islam. End note.) Many speakers also either directly or indirectly blamed the U.S. for the attack, several suggesting the Sunni extremists who perpetrated the bombing were agents of the U.S. and Israel. The most vicious attack came from former NIA MP Adnan Abdul Samad, who said, "These events were perpetrated by Takfiris, ignorant or hateful people who were committed by agents of the Zionist scheme." Calling the U.S. the "mother of sectarianism" and a "snake's head," Samad claimed the U.S. and "the evil powers" were creating crises between Muslims and confronting Iran and Hamas in order to "take control of the Islamic world." He continued, "Targeting these shrines destroys the unity of Sunnis and Shi'a in Iraq and boosts the Zionist-American scheme in the region."

16. (C) Shi'a MP Dr. Hassan Jowhar called for the replacement of Ambassador Khalilzad, whom he blamed for contributing to the sectarian tensions that led to the attack by publicly calling for the formation of a national unity government. Jowhar also demanded the U.S. stop negotiating with Sunni extremists and Baathists in Iraq, who he claimed were sheltering the attackers. "The incident has caused a great earthquake that will destroy whoever tries to ignite sedition between Muslims," he concluded. Jowhar was interrupted several times during his speech by shouts of "Death to Israel, death to America," which he did not attempt to stop.

JPG Secretary General Abdul Hussein Al-Sultan also blamed Ambassador Khalilzad for interfering in Iraqi internal politics, and argued that "religious authorities must stand against this Western scheme which seeks to eliminate Iraq." He blamed "Takfiris and Zionists" for the bombing.

17. (C) Shi'a MP Sayed Hussein Al-Qallaf blamed the bombing on "malignant hands" and said the "incident has highlighted the real enemy of Islam that seeks to sow seeds of sedition."

Shi'a cleric Shaykh Mohammed Al-Jazzaf suggested the "beneficiaries" of the bombing were "the three-part evil axis of Baathists, Takfiris, and the occupation troops." ICM Secretary General Dr. Bader Al-Nashi expressed Sunni

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solidarity with Shi'a Muslims and stressed the need to "protect our minds from sectarian ideas." Sectarianism, he argued, "enables foreign powers to achieve their schemes, which aim to weaken our belief in the possibility of (united) Islamic action." Liberal writer Ahmed Deyain was more direct: "The Zionist enemy is the sole beneficiary of this incident."

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